

Chapter 1

# Introduction and Project Background

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## **PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT**

This recirculated environmental impact report/supplemental environmental impact statement (REIR/SEIS) on the Supplemental Water Supply Project has been prepared by the East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). EBMUD is the lead agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

EBMUD has requested an amendment to its existing Water Service Contract 14-06-200-5183A with Reclamation to accommodate operation of certain of the Supplemental Water Supply Project alternatives, although EBMUD is also considering alternatives that would not require such an amendment. Because amendment of the water service contract is a federal action, Reclamation is serving as lead agency under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The environmental impacts of the Supplemental Water Supply Project were previously analyzed in the 1997 Supplemental Water Supply Project Draft Environmental Impact Report and Environmental Impact Statement (1997 DEIR/EIS). During the public comment period on the 1997 DEIR/EIS, EBMUD and Reclamation received numerous comment letters, several of which discussed the selection of alternatives considered in the DEIR/EIS. In addition, several comment letters expressed concerns regarding the impact assessment methodology used to address water resource and related aquatic biology issues.

It was determined that additional alternatives should be evaluated and presented in this REIR/SEIS. This decision was based in large part on comments and suggestions made by the City of Sacramento (City), the County of Sacramento (County), and other Sacramento area interests during the 1997 DEIR/EIS public review period and during subsequent discussions

since the completion of that public review period. As a result of comments received, the lead agencies have elected to prepare such analysis to respond to concerns raised by interested agencies and members of the public. Reclamation, EBMUD, and the Sacramento Parties have been meeting since May 2000. Discussions have focused on the alternatives to be considered and the approach to the impact analysis contained in this REIR/SEIS.

The CEQA Guidelines (Section 15088.5) include the following guidance on recirculation of a draft environmental impact report (EIR) or portions of a draft EIR:

“[A] lead agency is required to recirculate an EIR when significant new information is added to the EIR after public notice is given of the availability of the draft EIR for public review under Section 15087 but before certification. . . [T]he term “information” can include changes in the project or environmental setting as well as additional data or other information. New information added to an EIR is not “significant” unless the EIR is changed in a way that deprives the public of a meaningful opportunity to comment upon a substantial adverse environmental effect of the project or a feasible way to mitigate or avoid such an effect (including a feasible project alternative) that the project’s proponents have declined to implement. . . . Recirculation is not required where the new information added to the EIR merely clarifies or amplifies or makes insignificant modifications in an adequate EIR. . . . If the revision is limited to a few chapters or portions of the EIR, the lead agency need only recirculate the chapters or portions that have been modified.”

The Council of Environmental Quality’s (CEQ’s) NEPA Regulations (40 CFR 1502.9[c])

direct that agencies “[s]hall prepare supplements to either draft or final environmental impact statements if . . . [t]here are significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts.” They further direct that agencies “[m]ay also prepare supplements when the agency determines that the purposes of [NEPA] will be furthered by doing so.”

Pursuant to Section 15088.5 of the CEQA Guidelines and Section 1502.9 of the CEQ NEPA Regulations, EBMUD and Reclamation are recirculating and supplementing the CEQA/NEPA analysis for the project to address additional alternatives and issues related to impact assessment methodology for which new information has been developed since the 1997 DEIR/EIS was published.

This REIR/SEIS does not present a comprehensive analysis of the Supplemental Water Supply Project but rather supplements the information presented in the 1997 DEIR/EIS. Together, this REIR/SEIS and the 1997 DEIR/EIS provide the complete draft EIR/EIS analysis of potential environmental effects of the Supplemental Water Supply Project in compliance with CEQA and NEPA. Reviewers are therefore referred to the 1997 DEIR/EIS for background information on the project and for previously presented analyses.

### **ORGANIZATION OF THIS REIR/SEIS**

This REIR/SEIS generally follows the format of the 1997 DEIR/EIS and is organized in the following chapters:

- 1, Introduction and Project Background
- 2, Alternatives Considered in the REIR/SEIS
- 3, Hydrology, Water Supply, and Power
- 4, Water Quality
- 5, Fisheries
- 6, Recreation
- 7, Vegetation and Wetland Resources
- 8, Wildlife
- 9, Geology, Soils, Seismicity, and Groundwater
- 10, Land Use

- 11, Agricultural Resources
- 12, Transportation and Circulation
- 13, Air Quality
- 14, Noise
- 15, Public Health and Safety
- 16, Visual Resources
- 17, Cultural Resources
- 18, Programmatic Analysis of Groundwater Storage/Conjunctive Use
- 19, Citations
- 20, List of Preparers

Chapter 18, “Cumulative and Growth-Related Effects,” Chapter 19, “Impact Conclusions and Environmental Commitments,” and Chapter 20, “Consultation and Coordination,” from the 1997 DEIR/EIS are not included because there is no significant new information relevant to those chapters.

The cumulative impact analysis presented for Alternative 3, “Joint Water Supply,” in the 1997 DEIR/EIS is representative of cumulative effects that would be anticipated under the alternatives considered in this REIR/SEIS. That analysis assumed continuous use of the new lower American River intake facility with a capacity of 217 cubic feet per second (cfs). It also assumed increased demands consistent with the Sacramento Water Forum projections and increased demands throughout the Central Valley Project. That analysis is considered a “worst case” analysis and fully addresses the cumulative impacts that would be anticipated with implementation of the alternatives considered in this REIR/SEIS.